



Photo by Susanna Frohman

NEW GRANT CYCLE OPENS TO FUND FARMER VETERANS

Farmer Veteran Coalition announces its 2021 grant application is open through February 14th

One piece of equipment changed it all.

[Ben Martin](#) of Forest Grove, Oregon, served in the Marine Corps. After returning home from war, he pursued a career in winemaking.

Ben credits a grant from Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) for making the difference in his budding wine business early on. Back in 2015, FVC awarded Ben the supplies needed to bottle his first vintage of wine.

“We were just starting out making wine in the back of a horse barn,” acknowledged Ben. “We had no sales, no exposure. And we needed to bottle the vintage of wine. But we had no bottles, corks, or labels. FVC stepped in and gave us a grant for the supplies.

If it weren’t for FVC we wouldn’t have...well actually, I don’t know what we would have done, honestly.”

Ben is not alone.

A national non-profit that serves nearly 25,000 veterans turned farmers, FVC creates a new generation of farmers and food leaders while simultaneously offering veterans a place to heal on America’s farms. Through education and resources, FVC helps veterans with their own farming operation or with finding employment in related agricultural professions.

The [Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund](#) is their small grant program. It helps veterans in their early years of farming and ranching with the purchase of a piece of critical equipment. Hundreds of farmer veterans across the country who have benefitted from the grant share Ben's sentiment.

In 10 years, the Fellowship Fund has funded over 600 veterans with \$3 million in equipment.

And now, a new grant cycle is underway.

FVC has opened the [application](#) for their 2021 funding. This new cycle opened on the first of the year and remains active through Feb 14, 2021.

"These farmer veterans are selfless and service-minded," vocalizes Michael O'Gorman, who founded the organization and spurred a full military-to-agriculture movement. "They ask for very little, so we have to tell our community what the veterans need us to do for them."

He acknowledges that finding start-up capital is one of the biggest challenges farmers face. And that's exactly what this grant is designed to do.

"The Fellowship Fund is one of the most successful ways we help farmer veterans with their agricultural endeavors," emphasizes FVC's recently appointed Executive Director, Jeanette Lombardo. She anticipates the opportunity to directly benefit more farmer veterans in her new role and add them into the growing Fellowship family.

Application submissions are reviewed by an advisory committee of agricultural industry professionals. Awards will be granted in the spring. Common equipment requests include All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV), breeding livestock, fencing, and tractor implements.

This year, funding for the grants is coming from several partner organizations – Kubota Tractor Corporation, Tractor Supply Company, Wounded Warrior Project, Tarter USA, Homestead Implements, and Vital Farms.

FVC member Eric Grandon – who previously received a grant himself – is also giving back to the community that has supported his own agricultural journey by donating beekeeping equipment. "I now know what bees can do for anyone with any condition or problem," the West Virginia beekeeper reveals. "As long as I continue the success of Sugar Bottom Farm, FVC will always be at the top of my list just because I was at the top of [theirs]."

As for Ben, the Marine-turned-winemaker, he too shares a feeling common to veterans who now take on a new role of feeding their country and communities: "I'm much more relaxed these days. I feel more of a sense of a mission, a goal, something to live for, something that I appreciate and that I'm proud of."

About Farmer Veteran Coalition

The mission of Farmer Veteran Coalition is mobilizing veterans to feed America. Established in 2008, its in-house programs include the Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund small grant program, the nationally recognized *Homegrown By Heroes* label for veteran-grown products, and national and regional conferences. As the nation's largest nonprofit assisting veterans and active duty members of the U.S.

Armed Forces embark on careers in agriculture, FVC has been successful in getting millions of dollars of USDA funds appropriated for farmer veteran and the groups that support them. Learn more at: www.farmvetco.org or follow on Facebook or Instagram at @FarmerVeteranCoalition and Twitter at @FarmVetCo.

To sponsor equipment for the Fellowship Fund, contact Rachel Petitt at rachel@farmvetco.org. To donate to support farmer veterans directly, visit www.farmvetco.org or text GIVE and the dollar amount to 270-838-3276 (270-VET-FARM).

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